REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated January 23, 2008. In view of the foregoing amendments and following representations, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

By the above amendment, claims 1, 6, 7 and 11-13 have been amended. Thus, claims 1-16 are currently pending in the present application.

Next, the specification and abstract have been reviewed and revised in order to make a number of minor clarifying and other editorial amendments. To facilitate entry of the changes, a substitute specification and abstract has been prepared. No new matter has been added. Also enclosed is a "marked-up" copy of the original specification and abstract to show the changes that have been incorporated into the substitute specification and abstract. The enclosed copy is entitled "*Version with Markings to Show Changes Made*."

In the previous Office Action, claims 1, 2, 5-7 and 11 were rejected over the prior art, and claims 3, 4, 8-10 and 12-16 were objected to as depending from a rejected claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In particular, claims 1, 5-7 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Patent No. 61-153701 (hereinafter "JP '701); and claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP '701 in view of Kim (U.S. Patent No. 6,202,385). It is submitted that the present invention, as defined in the amended claims, now clearly distinguishes over the applied prior art references for the following reasons.

The present invention, as defined in claim 1, is directed to tablet packing apparatus including a bounce preventing member disposed in the tablet drop guide path and positioned so as to oppose

the tablet outlets of the tablet feeders, wherein the bounce preventing member is obliquely provided with respect to the plumb line so that it recedes from the tablet outlets in a direction toward a lower end thereof.

JP '701 discloses a tablet packing apparatus including a soft sheet 6 made of cloth, polyethylene or so (see Fig. 1; and the partial English Translation provided in the IDS filed January 16, 2006). The soft sheet 6 is suspended in a tablet passage and is provided with a weight 17 at a lower end thereof. As shown in Fig. 1, the suspended soft sheet 6 is arranged in a vertical orientation in the tablet passage. Therefore, the light tablet will bounce on the soft sheet 6, causing the disadvantages described in the present specification in that the tablet discharged from the tablet outlet will bounce between the back side plate and a rear wall opposing the tablet outlet, making the dropping time longer (see page 2, lines 3 to 9, and lines 15 to 18 of the specification of the present invention).

In contrast, claim 1 requires, *inter alia*, a bounce preventing member disposed in the tablet drop guide path and positioned so as to oppose the tablet outlets of the tablet feeders, wherein the bounce preventing member is obliquely provided with respect to the plumb line so that it recedes from the tablet outlets in a direction toward a lower end thereof. Thus, the bounce angle of a dropping tablet is suppressed; allowing the tablet to free fall downward without bouncing several times, and thus the tablet dropping time can be shortened. As a result, it is possible to promptly pack the tablet dropped through the tablet drop guide path and eliminate the possibility that the tablet will contaminate a subsequent package (see page 4, lines 9-16 of the present specification as originally filed). Clearly, the vertical sheet of JP '701 does not correspond to the angled bounce preventing

member recited in claim 1 of the present application. In view of the above, it is submitted that independent claim 1 is now clearly allowable over the tablet packing apparatus disclosed in JP '701.

Independent Claim 6

The bounce preventing member of JP '701 is described above. Clearly, JP '701 does not disclose or suggest a bounce preventing member that extends obliquely from a lower edge of an upper-stage tablet outlet or the vicinity thereof to a position apart from a lower-stage tablet outlet. In fact, as shown in Fig. 1 of JP '701, no member is attached around the edge of the tablet discharge port 16. Therefore, it is submitted that claim 6 is not anticipated by the disclosure of JP '701.

Kim is cited by the Examiner to teach a flexible plate to cushion tablets. Kim discloses a guide plate 50 provided on an upper edge of a release opening 40. However, guide plate 50 is a conventional sheet member, which is described in the present specification in the description of related art. Clearly, the Kim guide plate 50 does not extend obliquely from a lower edge of an upper-stage tablet outlet to a position apart from a lower-stage tablet outlet as required in claim 6. Thus, it is submitted that the present invention, as defined in claim 6, is not disclosed or suggested by the collective teachings of JP '701 and the Kim reference.

Claims 2-5 and 7-16 depend, directly or indirectly, from one of the allowable independent claims, and are therefore allowable at least by virtue of their dependencies.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the present application is now clearly in condition for allowance. The Examiner therefore is requested to pass this case to issue.

In the event that the Examiner has any comments or suggestions of a nature necessary to place this case in condition for allowance, then the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney by telephone to promptly resolve any remaining matters.

Respectfully submitted,

Shoji YUYAMA et al.

By:_____

Michael S. Huppert
Registration No. 40,268
Attorney for Applicants

MSH/kjf
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
June 23, 2008